

DANGEROUS

Transport is not only very inconvenient and costly, it can also be dangerous. We often read of deaths in road or train accidents. Some employers transport their workers in dangerous open trucks. There have been many people killed in bus accidents, including in Putco buses.

MR LUCAS NGCOBO

Mr Lucas Ngcobo lives in Clermont. His firm recently transferred him to Hammarsdale where he works from 7 to 5.

Every morning he gets up at 4 o'clock. The only buses to Hammarsdale leave from Pinetown and so Ngcobo takes a taxi from Clermont to Pinetown. This costs 20c. He catches a bus at 5.15 which gets him to Hammarsdale in time for work. The busfare is 29c. After work he again spends 29c on the bus and 20c for the taxi. He gets back home at 7.

Every day he spends 98c on transport. His wages are R17 a week, so that out of R17 he uses R4,90 for transport. His firm doesn't pay him a transport allowance but pay is deducted if he comes late. We can say that more than half Mr Ngcobo's life is being used by his firm and even the small amount of money they give him in return isn't all his to keep.

WHY?

Why is commuting such a hardship? What are the reasons for the predicament? Abasebenzi spoke to Mrs Alice Gumede from Kwa Mashu: "I used to live in Cato Manor and the busfare was cheap. But in the early 1960s the government moved us to these dormitories and after that the busfare was much more."

This shows the main reason why transport is such a problem. The government has moved Blacks out of the city centre, but they are still needed to work every day in the city. The bosses don't care that we have to commute long distances. And the bus companies are happy to make big profits from our money.

WORKERS DEMAND TRANSPORT ALLOWANCE

Some firms in Durban are giving their workers transport allowances. Workers we spoke to said that workers' organisations should demand that all transport costs be paid by the employers.

EDITORIALBUSES AND BOYCOTTS

Workers have struggled for better transport for many years.

Together we have fought against high prices, poor services, and bad conditions on the buses.

Many times workers have boycotted the buses in protest. Between 1943 and 1957 workers from Alexandria boycotted the buses on three separate occasions when the owners increased fares.

Each time the solidarity of the workers forced the bus owners to reduce the prices.

The bus owners, the factory bosses, and the police have always told us that the boycotts were started by agitators, but we know that this is not true.

The truth is that the government forces us to live many miles from our places of work.

We are forced to spend long hours travelling to and from work so that we spend little time with our families.

The bosses pay us too little to meet the cost.

Our struggle against the bus owners is therefore only part of our overall struggle for the rights of workers.

Problems with the buses will only stop when we have achieved this victory.

THE STRUGGLE ON THE MINES

The wealth of S.A. depends on gold mining. The Black South African mineworker, the man who produces the gold, works deep underground, far from his family, and far from other workers. His wage is very low, and every year many hundreds of miners die in accidents.

During last year and in January 1975 the mineworkers have renewed their struggle for better wages and better conditions. Why should other workers take notice of this?

Victories for the mineworkers are victories for all workers, because it is known that when wages go up on the mines, they go up in other industries as well.

Also the mineworkers' struggle is of special interest to all workers who are forced to leave their homes and live in compounds, hostels and such places.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE MINeworkERS is the call the Abasebenzi makes to Black workers in all industries.

THE STRUGGLE ON THE MINES

We took this photograph of a man caught in two minds outside a recruiting office of the gold mines in Harding.

The mines are now offering a starting wage of about R40 a month. Before the miners became militant it was about R13 a month, two or three years ago.

Why are the mineowners trying to get more men?

THE SHORTAGE OF MINeworkERS

The Malawians are not coming anymore. And nobody knows if the miners from Mocambique will still come now that Mocambique is free. The old labour agreement between the governments of S.A. and Mocambique said that the miners could not have a union. Now Frelimo may say: "Our men will come only if they can have a union and the same working conditions that miners have in other countries."

We see that changes taking place around us in Africa can help to change the situation of workers in South Africa.